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Liburd, Janne J.; Heape, Chris; Duedahl Knudsen, Eva

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Tourism, Nature Conservation and UNESCO World Heritage Stewardship in the Danish Wadden Sea

Janne J. Liburd, Professor, D.Phil, Ph.D.

Chris Heape, Ph.D

Eva Duedahl Knudsen, MA International Tourism

Agenda

1. Tourism and Nature Conservation in National Parks
2. Stewardship
3. UNESCO World Heritage
4. Tourism Co-design
5. Findings
6. Future research perspectives

1. Tourism and Nature Conservation in National Parks

- IUCN (2008) Nature conservation Category 2, National Parks: Large natural or near natural areas set aside to protect large-scale ecological processes and recreation
- Tourism and recreation have been among the motivating forces for land preservation since the earliest National Parks were established (Liburd, 2006)
- Predicaments easily arise from the complex relations between preservation of nature, culture and tourism, and the ways in which attitudes toward natural and cultural environments are contested for a variety of present day purposes.

National Parks in Denmark

*“A Danish national park holds some of Denmark's most **unique and valuable nature areas and landscapes**. These are areas of **importance to the Danes**, but they are also given and will receive **international attention** and significance. National parks also include areas which have already been nominated as international nature protection areas (NATURA 2000 areas).*

*The Danish national parks are **not museums**. People live, work and stay in the Danish national parks. Parts of the national parks are privately owned.”*

(Source: <http://danmarksnationalparker.dk/english/> accessed May 5, 2017)

Valuing nature

- Values can be seen as determining priorities, as internal compasses or as springboards for action resembling moral imperatives that implicitly or explicitly guide action (Oyserman, 2001)
- Values and meanings are attributed to specific natural areas and/or historical events as 'evidence' that the nation is distinctive.

UNESCO's Outstanding Universal Values (1972)

“The cultural and natural heritage is among the priceless and irreplaceable assets, not only of each nation, but of humanity as a whole.

The loss, through deterioration or disappearance, of any of these most prized assets constitutes an impoverishment of the heritage of all the peoples of the world.”



2. Stewardship

- ✓ Neubaum (2013) defines stewardship as “caring and loyal devotion to an organization, institution, or social group” (p. 2)
- ✓ Informal governance is exercised by stewards who care, display loyal devotion and identify with the conservation of National Parks *beyond* own and state interests
- ✓ The concept of stewardship puts emphasis on the people involved in conservation efforts, their values and dynamic interrelations.

3. Tourism Co-Design

- Tourism co-design is a co-generative and co-learning development endeavour that leverages the communicative interaction between people, and enable people to change their practices (Heape, 2007; Liburd, Heape & Nielsen, 2017)
- Part of the larger three-year research project 'Innovation in Coastal Tourism: Co-creating Competitive Experiences' (InnoCoast), financed by Innovation Fund Denmark
- 12 in-depth interviews with key tourism operators, public sector managers and other stakeholders in Danish Wadden Sea National Park and UNESCO World Heritage Site
- By visiting and bringing locals who live in the Wadden Sea National Park together in a series of workshops we identified, principally from their narratives about life in the area, a range of sustainable tourism, innovation and stewardship opportunities.

4. Findings: Stewardship, identity and care

*“We’re **proud** to live and work in the National Park, and we’ve become National Park partners to make an extra effort for the area. (...)*

So we’re promoting awareness about the National Park, not ourselves”

“It’s like a heart child to me”

*“We love to **share** our interest in the National Park”.*

Findings: Stewardship and tourism

*“The first time your experience the Wadden Sea,
the experience is rather shallow.*

*But upon return, visitors begin to sense
the nuances and depth of nature’s richness”*

“What you find beautiful, you nurture and keep close at heart.”

Findings: Stewardship and Quality of Life

*“The first thing many residents do every day
is to say good morning to the wadden birds”*

*“Maybe the area appears poor to some ‘cause we don’t have big castles, or the most
fertile field of wheat. But we’re immensely rich in nature.
The wind makes us stand up strong.”*

Findings: Stewardship and Re-negotiation of Values

“There are lots of nature regulations, which were already present before it became a National Park and World Heritage.

We constantly have to relate to these rules, and when we do, we’re pushed into a joint discussion of what we want to preserve for future generations”

“You really have a lot of sky here”

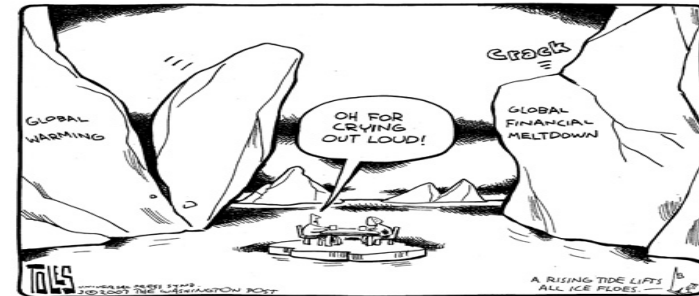
Preliminary conclusions

- ✓ UNESCO World Heritage is a potentially powerful driver towards more sustainable practices in tourism and nature conservation
- ✓ Understanding the (shifting) values of nature, tourism and UNESCO World Heritage stewardship reveals potential for advancing nature conservation, management mechanisms, and the scientific possibilities for real-world engagement



6. Future research perspectives

1. How can the UNESCO World Heritage Wadden (National Parks) help engender active and responsible ageing?
2. How can stewards engage tourists' nature conservation knowledge, skills and experiences for sustainable development?
 - a) In climate change mitigation and reduction practices?
 - b) In reconciliation of universal versus local, (shifting) values?





Thank you
Any questions?